

Melissa - This will be in response to your letter of Aug. 11th., regarding some of my time with the Leamington Flyers.

Bill Sanford - Retired in North Vancouver, B.C.

Looking back in history with the Flyers I had so many great memories it is hard to remember all the Special ones. I will note the ones that really stand out in my mind after all of these years of Leamington Flyer History.

The years I played with the Flyers - 6 years 1951-52 to 1956-57 and coached three years - 1964-65 and 1965-66 both OMHA Juvenile. In 1967-68 the Flyers went OHA Junior B. After Marc Reaume and Al Plouffe resigned as the Flyer coaches before the first of this year I took over coaching - A very long year - we played 54 games and won only 7 games.

My six years as a player I was a left wing. My number the first 3 years was 11 and the last 3 years it was 6.

I played with the original Flyers which started out as Myles Meteors in 51-52. We played in the Windsor Industrial League that first year before we had our arena. In 1952 we played in the ORHA play downs as the Blytheswood Flyers. - This was the start of the Leamington Flyers hockey club. We went to the finals against Sutton and they beat us in the third game in the Aymer arena. (This was the only arena with ice so late in the season and it served as our home rink). Prior to these play downs we won the the Southern Ontario ORHA play downs. Our coach was Bill Burgess who organized this original Flyer team - Murray Miles was our sponsor and he had a school bus take the team to Windsor.

In May of 1952 Jack Adams came to our windup Banquet at the First Baptist Church and stated when we do get our arena he will bring to Leamington the Detroit Red Wings to play the Leamington Flyers. We practiced in Blenheim, Chatham and Windsor. Prior to the 51-52 team many of us played at the Jones and Wigle outdoor rinks, Hillman marsh and various ponds around Leamington.

In the 1952-53 and 1953-54 Seasons we played in the South Western Ontario Association against teams from Dresden, Wallaceburg, Morpeth (Essex/Kents), Chatham and Glencoe. This league was classed as Intermediate "B".

December 13, 1954 - Jim Mackenzie and I were very fortunate to be the first to skate in our new Recreation and Agriculture Centre. We returned to the new arena from our Flyer practice in Blenheim and our Erie Shores Golf Pro John Moffat, who was the first arena Manager asked us if we would like to try out the new ice. This was a very special memory.

December 15, 1954 - The Leamington Flyers played their first game at our new arena. We played Glencoe and won 8 to 2. Eric Mackenzie scored the very first goal in the arena. In the game Eric scored 2 goals as did Jim Duddy, Jim Mackenzie, Ted Lawrence, Tony Minkewich and Leo Rochon each scored a goal.

November 23, 1955 - The official opening of our Recreation and Agriculture Center. It was an outstanding night for the opening of one of finest ice facilities in Western Ontario. Acting as Masters of Ceremonies were two very special Leamington people - Everett Smith and Al Bruner.. The opening participants - Leamington High School Pipe Band, Leamington Boy's Band, Mayor Grace McFarland, the centers board of directors, F.T. Sherk, Legion Color Party, presentation of Queen's picture, one

end of curling with Alf Bennie as commentator, Leamington High School Majorettes on skates, Leamington Figure Skating Club, Minor Bantam Hockey and an East West Hockey Game which included the Leamington Flyers (Eric, Jim and Bill MacKenzie, Bob Way, Caesar Brndjar and myself). Also representatives of the South Essex League -Leamington Erie Produce, Blytheswood Mic Macs, Wheatley Omsteads, Harrow Sailors, Essex Bombers and Kingsville Honkers.

The Detroit Red Wings came to Leamington to play the Leamington Flyers as Jack Adams promised and they brought 90% of their team twice in 1955 and 1956. (I have never heard of a NHL team playing two exhibition games with minor teams such as the Leamington Flyers, before or after. No charge to our organization - it was totally a good PR move from the Wings. Over the years the Detroit organization helped the Flyers and our original Pee Wee Hockey Tournaments many times. The Wings recognized we had a strong Minor Hockey program as they sent two of our Special Flyers on their way to the NHL --- Brad Selwood and Randy Manery). My best memory of the Flyers was the fact the management of the Wings and the Flyers split our teams up for the games and since I was such a Red Wing Nut they played me between Ted Lindsay and Gordie Howe and I scored a good goal assisted by Mr. Hockey and Ted Lindsay. This is without a doubt my biggest thrill in all of my sporting activities. Both games were total sell outs. What a Special Thrill for this old Leamington Flyer.

On April 21, 1966 our Leamington Juvenile Flyers won the Ontario Championship over Dorset Park, Toronto. We won the series in two straight games with Greg Mason scoring a hat trick in both games. This was the 5th., OMHA Championship that I was a part of and it is a very special memory for this old Flyer against a very strong Toronto team.

Over my 17 years with early Flyer and LDMHA Leamington hockey, I was fortunate to work and play with many players and outstanding builders. The following are my special Hall of Fame people I have worked with over these early years in Leamington.

Players --- Eric Mackenzie, Jim Mackenzie, Tony Minkewich, Bob Way, Ray Cleary, Don (Casey) Jones, Norm Adam, Randy Manery, Brad Selwood, Bill Ruitter and Don Bruner.
Builders --- Fred Epplert (Number One), Bill Burgess, Jerry Brooks and Bob Fox.

Two other people who worked so hard to bring our original Arena to completion was Frank Sherk president of Heinz Canada who had the Heinz companies total resources available to building this fine outstanding arean for the people of Leamington. Also Mayor Jesse Sherman who did so much to get our Leamington Recreation Center underway.

AGAIN THESE PEOPLE ARE SOME OF THE OUTSTANDING PFOPLE I WORKED WITH OVER MY FLYER YEARS IN LEAMINGTON --- THERE ARE MANY MORE OUTSTANDING FLYER PLAYERS AND BUILDERS --- THESE ARE THE ONES WHO STAND OUT IN MY MIND AFTER ALL OF THE YEARS.